

# Ballad: The Bishop And The 'Busman

In "The Bishop and The 'Busman," a whimsical ballad from "The Bab Ballads," we encounter a narrative set in London, centered around a stout, zealous Bishop and a Jewish 'busman named Hash Baz Ben—who also bears the names Jedediah, Solomon, and Zabulon. The Bishop, determined to convert the 'busman to Christianity, embarks on a daily journey with him, riding the Putney bus from Fulham town, proclaiming the 'busman's Jewish identity and religious practices to the amusement and later, the annoyance, of onlookers.

Initially, the 'busman is intrigued and entertained by the Bishop's peculiar mission, viewing it as harmless fun. The Bishop's daily declarations highlight Hash Baz Ben's religious adherence, pointedly noting his avoidance of pork and his distinct physical features, emblematic of his Jewish heritage. This spectacle draws the attention of "gay young dogs," a term denoting stylish, young onlookers who delight in the Bishop's eccentric crusade, which blends public sermon with personal fixation on the 'busman.

However, the novelty wears off over seven years, transitioning from amusement to distress for Hash Baz Ben. The persistent public attention and the Bishop's relentless focus on his ethnic and religious identifiers take a toll on the 'busman, transforming him into a reluctant spectacle and a subject of widespread mockery. This unwanted fame forces him to confront his visibility and vulnerability in the public domain, leading him to question the Bishop's motivations directly.

Confronting the Bishop in his own residence, Hash Baz Ben seeks an explanation for the prolonged harassment. It is here that the ballad captures the climax of its tale, presenting a moment ripe for potential insight or tragedy. The Bishop's response is impending, and the reader is left anticipating a resolution that bridges the gap between two distinct worlds: one of unwavering religious zeal and another of cultural fidelity and personal dignity. The narrative encapsulates themes of identity, tolerance,

and the quest for understanding across cultural divides, all while maintaining a light-hearted, satirical tone characteristic of the Bab Ballads.

